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DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

<http://dmh.lacounty.gov>

550 SOUTH VERMONT AVENUE, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90020

April 13, 2012

TO: DCFS Staff
DMH Children's Providers
DMH Specialized Foster Care Staff

FROM: Marvin J. Southard, D.S.W.
Director, Department of Mental Health

Philip L. Browning
Director, Department of Children and Family Services

SUBJECT: **DMH SHARING OF MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION WITH DCFS
FOR PURPOSES OF COORDINATING CARE**

As part of the County's ongoing efforts to coordinate services for children and families and consistent with the values and principles of the Core Practice Model, Department of Mental Health (DMH) will be initiating the regular sharing of certain mental health information from the Integrated System (IS) with Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) for the purpose of coordinating the care of children with open DCFS cases who are receiving mental health care. Via this memorandum, we hope to inform you of the elements of the information to be shared, the authority by which the information is being shared, and our shared expectations for how this information will be used.

DMH and DCFS conduct a weekly matching of client records and employ a sophisticated matching process to determine which clients are receiving services concurrently from the two Departments. This matching process has been occurring for several years under the authority of the Federal District Court in the matter of Katie A. To this point the matched data has been used for a variety of administrative purposes, allowing the County to monitor progress toward meeting a number of the obligations associated with the Katie A. Settlement Agreement.

After discussions with DMH and DCFS, County Counsel and program staff, we are going to initiate a process by which certain children's mental health information is going to be shared routinely with DCFS for the purpose of coordinating care. On a weekly basis DMH will share with DCFS the following information from the IS on those children who are determined through the match process to have current open cases in both

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systems or who currently have an open DCFS case and who have received mental health services during the life of the current case:

- Name of Provider Agency;
- Name of Rendering Provider(s);
- Name of Program (FSP, Wraparound, TBS, PMRT, etc.) if applicable;
- Service Information (type, location, date); and
- Contact Phone Number.

DMH will not be sharing diagnosis with DCFS or any client information that is not in the IS. The Department will also not be sharing mental health information related to parents or adult caregivers of DCFS clients.

Once DCFS is provided with the information, DCFS will transmit the information to the case carrying Children's Social Worker (CSW) and their supervisor for each matched case. The CSWs should only be receiving mental health information for children on their current individual caseloads.

We expect that this information sharing process will result in follow-up communication from CSWs to mental health staff regarding common clients. We want to make the point that this new protocol does not change the nature of the release of information by rendering providers or provider agencies. Staff and providers must continue to operate under Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations and rules of confidentiality. We do not expect providers to release confidential case material, such as progress notes, or information that does not serve the purpose of coordinating care.

This release of information should facilitate the teaming process and assist in the promotion of improved outcomes for the children and youth served by our two Departments.

Our goal is for every child served by DCFS to have a family team, whose members meet, communicate, plan together, and coordinate their efforts in a unified fashion to address critical issues/needs.

Should you have questions about this process, please contact Greg Lecklitner, Ph.D., DMH District Chief, at glecklitner@dmh.lacounty.gov or Adrienne Olson, LCSW, DCFS Division Chief, at olsona@dcfs.lacounty.gov.

MJS:PLB:BM:GL:am